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ABSTRACT

As a part of a final report of the National Study of American Indian Education, this survey was conducted among 8 elementary schools in Bloomington, Minnesota. The study was concerned primarily with conceptions held by white elementary school children about the American Indians. Secondly, it was hoped that the survey would provide broader insights and would help to solidify attitudes about Indians. Students were asked to write 1-page papers on "What I Know About Indians" to determine the type and quantity of previous experience of any kind that these students had had with American Indians. It was hoped that this approach would allow the students to provide information unaffected by an overly structured instrument. Responses were analyzed in terms of (1) Factual Statements and (2) Attitudes Toward Indians. Some 643 responses were recorded from students in grades 3-6. A great diversity of knowledge about Indians was found. It was felt that the affective and factual pictures of American Indians presented by the students tended to be uncomplimentary and inaccurate and that factual knowledge of American Indians was overgeneralized. In conclusion, suggestions are presented for effective guidelines in the development, employment, and evaluation of Indian cultural and historical materials. (EL)

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AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

Series III
No. 5

SURBURBAN SCHOOL CHILDREN AND AMERICAN INDIANS: A SURVEY OF IMPRESSIONS

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NATIONAL STUDY OF AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

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V. A Survey of the Education of American Indians.

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SUBURBAN SCHOOL CHILDREN AND AMERICAN INDIANS: A SURVEY OF IMPRESSIONS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....i

Introduction.....1

The Survey.....1

Riverside School.....2

Humboldt Heights Elementary School.....7

Unidentified Elementary School I.....12

Unidentified Elementary School II.....17

Park School.....21

Brookside School.....25

Creekside School.....28

Indians Mounds Elementary School.....29

A Comparison of All Participating Schools by Grade Level.....33

Conclusions and Suggestions.....36

Some Further Confusions About American Indians.....41

Some Further Suggestions to the Reader.....44

Appendix.....46

References

PREFACE

As a result of the findings presented and discussed in this report, the University of Minnesota's College of Education and General Extension Division will soon begin video taping a nine-credit Indian education college course for possible state-wide telecasting during the 1970-71 academic year. This project will be jointly sponsored by many white, Indian, and mixed organizations and groups. It will be a small attempt to help "plug the gap" existing in Bloomington, Minnesota's school system and, we believe, in many school systems over the state. The quality and relevance of this televised course will be directly related to many of the organizational, communications-related, scholarly, and ideological notions dealt with throughout the report. It is hoped that the course will be a success in at least three ways: that it will first of all attempt to deal positively with some of the "attitudes" which we have found in the Bloomington research, and which we know to exist from research findings elsewhere in the state; secondly, we hope that certain "factual" matters concerning the American Indian and his life styles before and after white contact will be dealt with in a manner acceptable to canons of objectivity and truth and all parties involved; and thirdly, we hope that, following reasonable success in attaining the first two goals, the course will provide adequate incentive and means for teachers all over Minnesota to develop their own curriculum units on American Indians for classroom use. We believe that a great deal can be expected of Minnesota's teachers in this regard, and it is hoped that means will be available to distribute the best of their curriculum development efforts on a state-wide basis. Throughout this entire effort, a maximum amount of energy will be devoted to presenting information about contemporary, living and breathing American Indians in the context of relevant historical and cultural antecedents. This report helps point up the basic need for such a focus.

Indians

Indians once living
Where now we are living.

I thought how little I know
About Indians. Oh, I know

What I have heard - not much.
When I think how little

I wonder about them,
When a mere mention of them,

Indians, starts me. I
Think of their wigwams. I

Think of canoes. I think
Of quick arrows. I think

Of things Indian. And still
I think of their bright still

Summers, when these hills
And meadows on these hills

Shone in the morning,
Suns before this morning.

----A suburban schoolchild from
Bloomington, Minnesota

Introduction

The long-awaited "Indian Education Subcommittee" report on American Indian education[1] has now been released and is no less than satisfying for those Indians and non-Indians seeking fuller documentation of the historical and current crimes and indignities inflicted by the white man upon the Indian. In fact, the subcommittee report begins its chapter on public education ("Failure of the Public Schools") with the following casual introduction: "To thousands of Americans, the American Indian is, and always will be, dirty, lazy, and drunk. That's the way they picture him; that's the way they treat him." The writers of the report go on to say that:

> It is this kind of history (inaccurate, degrading, and biologically tainted) -- the kind taught formally in the classroom and informally on streetcorners -- which creates feelings of inferiority among Indian students, gives them a warped understanding of their cultural heritage and propagates stereotypes.
>
> The manner in which Indians are treated in textbooks -- one of the most powerful means by which our society transmits ideas from generation to generation -- typifies the misunderstanding the American public as a whole has regarding the Indian, indicates how misconceptions can become a part of a person's mind-set.[2]

The Survey

Following these lines of interest, a survey was designed in December, 1969 for twenty-one elementary schools in suburban Bloomington, Minnesota. The schools were sent a letter[3] asking their assistance in surveying certain elementary grades in the Bloomington schools. Of the twenty-one schools contacted, eleven replied, and of these eleven, eight agreed to participate in the survey.

The survey was broadly concerned with conceptions held by white elementary school children about the American Indian. Secondarily, it was hoped that the survey would provide insights into the formulative effects of educational experience on interracial viewpoints -- to solidify attitudes

about Indians, to broaden insights about Indians, or to essentially leave attitudes unaffected. It was expected that the majority of the white Bloomington elementary students would regard American Indians with attitudes and prejudices instilled through the mass media, peers, parents, and curricular materials and teachers encountered in school. Thus, the study was intentionally broad-gauged; it asked the students to write a one-page paper on the topic, "What I Know About Indians." It was hoped that this approach would allow the students to provide a great deal of information unaffected by an overly structured instrument.

Of the twenty-one Bloomington schools contacted, eight replied with packets of student papers. There was a total of 643 papers, which were broken down into the following grades and schools:

School	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth
Riverside	25	25	27	23
Humboldt Heights	26	26	17	21
Unlabelled	26	25	25	26
Unlabelled	16	22	28	21
Park	7	5	8	19
Brookside	0	30	21	23
Indian Mounds	26	24	16	27
Creekside	58	0	0	0
	184	157	142	160

The papers ranged in length from one sentence to three pages, but with the average paper consisting of about seventy-five words. An attempt was made to categorize content of these papers into two types: "factual statements" or "attitudes toward Indians". We do not presume that these categories are entirely adequate; rather, they are rough attempts to determine the type and quantity of previous experience of any kind related to American Indians. No attempt was made to judge the accuracy of the statements.

Riverside School

The third grade in Riverside Elementary School turned in twenty-five papers which were categorized as follows:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They live in the Black Hills. (1)
They have dark skin. (1)
They have long hair. (1)
They eat all of their food raw. (1)
They killed others. (1)
They don't hunt for fun. (1)
Sometimes they had wars and many people got injured. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Wood huts (6)
Tepees (8)
Straw (2)
Mud (2)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (7)
Deer (6)
Bear (6)
Fish (3)
Corn (5)

D. Types of Indian clothing

Very little (1)
Animal skins (12)
Mocassins (2)
Papoose (1)

E. Differences between Indians

Different dwellings (3)
Different tribes (2)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

Some Indians are nice, some mean. (1)
Indians are smart. (1)
I like Indians very much. (1)

The fourth grade at Riverside school turned in twenty-five (25) papers, categorized in the following way:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They have red skin. (6)
They go on the warpath. (2)

A. Generalizations (cont.)

They traded. (1)
They use travois. (4)
They have dogs. (1)
They had war and rain dances. (1)
Indians still live today. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepees (7)
Tents (1)
Bark (1)
Wigwam (1)

C. Types of Indian food

Corn (1)
Rice (1)
Maple sugar (2)
Fish (1)

D. Types of Indian clothing

Animal skins (2)
Mocassins (1)
Papoose (1)

E. Differences between Indians

Comparison of Sioux and Chippewa (18)
Different languages (2)

F. Indian possessions

Canoes (2)
Tomahawks (3)
Bows and arrows (10)
Guns from the French (14)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

White men pushed them out. (1)
They are sometimes friendly. (1)

The fifth grade from Riverside school submitted twenty-seven (27) papers:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

Indians came from Asia. (9)
They were named by Columbus. (3)
They used the travois. (1)
They had horses from the whites. (1)
The women cook; the men hunt. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Stick and mud (3)
Tepees (5)
Stone (2)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (12)
Vegetables (3)
Deer (2)
Corn (3)

D. Types of Indian clothing

Mocassins (1)
Bear/deer skins (2)

E. Differences between Indians (specific tribe mentioned)

Incas described (20)
Aztecs described (14)
Sioux described (8)
Incas made bridges. (4)
The Sioux killed the whites. (1)
The Sioux were cheated. (1)
Blackfoot customs:
They tie a person to a stake and shoot arrows at him. (2)
They ran after him, caught him, and killed him. (2)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

The whites got them drunk and got their land. (1)

The sixth graders at Riverside submitted twenty-three (23) papers, which were categorized in the following manner:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They have dark skin. (1)
They were here first. (1)
They wore war paint. (2)
They had different superstitions. (3)
They live just like us. (1)
Now they have good homes. (1)
They live on reservations. (5)

A. Generalizations (cont.)

They live off of tourists. (1)
Whites started the scalping. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepees (7)
Huts (7)
Igloo (1)

C. Types of Indian food

Deer (3)
Buffalo (5)
Corn (1)
Rice (1)

D. Types of Indian clothing

Animal skin (3)
Papoose (2)
War paint (2)

E. Differences between Indians

Description of Sioux and/or Chippewa (7)
Recognition of various tribes (5)
Recognition of various types of dwellings (5)

F. Indian possessions

Spears (1)
Bows and arrows (4)
Whites brought them the horse and gun. (1)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

We should be grateful to them. (1)
Some are civilized, some live on the reservation. (1)
They used to kill, but now they act like regular people. (1)
There was killing because men didn't think. (1)
They were cheated of land. (4)
They were attacked. (1)
They are superstitious. (1)
They have funny names. (1)
They were better for they loved the land. (1)
They're no different from us. (1)
They shouldn't have to live on reservations, should live like us. (1)
If they have willpower, they can get jobs. (1)

Although the third graders at Riverside school had little conception of the American Indian today, they recognized that Indians lived in different dwellings in the past (in nearly one-fourth of the cases) and were not intent upon the stereotypic "tepees". Few "attitudes"were expressed as these students tended to pay more attention to the past. Among the fourth graders, eighteen of twenty-five mentioned the Sioux and Chippewa and discussed some differences between the two. Only one student recognized Indians as a current population phenomenon ("Indians still live today"), and only one expressed the idea that the white man had caused them to migrate. Of the twenty-seven fifth grade papers from Riverside, fourteen compared the Inca, the Aztec, and Sioux. There appeared to be no recognition of present Indian populations, and there were no "attitudes" expressed, aside from the value-vague statement that "Whites got them drunk and got their land." Eight of these twenty-seven students had heard about the migration passage from Asia. In the sixth grade at Riverside, opinions abounded. Five of the twenty-seven respondents recognized differences in tribes or dwellings. Five knew of the existence of reservations. Nearly every paper in this class had an opinion, labelling Indians in a dualistic (good/bad) fashion and whites as "cheaters". Four students insisted there were no differences between whites and Indians.

Humboldt Heights Elementary School

The third grade of Humboldt Heights returned twenty-four (24) papers, categorized as follows:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They gave us names. (1)
They have so many mothers don't know which is theirs. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepees (12)
Long house (3)

C. Types of Indian food

Corn (3)
Buffalo (17)
Fish (1)
Deer (2)
Dog liver (2)

D. Types of Indian clothing

Mocassins (1)

E. Differences between Indians (specific tribe mentioned)

Woodland/Plains described (6)
Sioux/Chippewa described (8)
Recognition of various tribes (3)
Recognition of various languages (1)

F. Indian possessions

Travois (5)
Canoes (3)
Tomahawk (2)
Buffalo (4)
Horses from whites (1)
Arrows (1)

II. "Attitudes"

None

The fourth grade of Humboldt Heights submitted twenty-six (26) papers:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They were first in Minnesota. (2)
They helped pioneers. (14)
They came from the Bering Strait. (1)
They dug into a child's skin as punishment. (1)
They are now in reservations. (2)
There aren't many in Bloomington. (1)
They had many gods. (3)
They were at the First Thanksgiving. (3)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepee (8)
Hogans (1)
Rock (2)

C. Types of Indian food

None mentioned

D. Types of Indian clothing

War paint (1)

E. Differences between Indians (specific tribe mentioned)

Recognition of various tribes (1)
Most now are Sioux. (1)

F. Indian possessions

Canoes (3)
Totem poles (1)
Bows and arrows (1)
Guns from whites (1)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

We cheated them of their land. (1)
Indians don't fight whites, only other Indians. (1)
Indians were mean and killed. (1)
They're friendly. (1)

The fifth grade at Humboldt Heights produced seventeen (17) papers on the topic, "What I Know About Indians":

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They helped whites. (2)
They were here first. (2)
They used sign language. (1)
They had medicine men. (1)
They did bead work. (1)
Not too many on reservations. (1)
They live by tribal law. (1)
They live on reservations. (10)
They still live in tepees, are hungry and probably have no clothes. (1)
Now they live normally and get jobs. (1)
State doesn't have money so they must work. (1)
Most are poor, live in slums, and can't go to school. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepees (4)
Brick (1)
Wood (1)
Longhouse (1)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (8)
Deer (3)
Fish (2)
Corn (3)
Maple sugar (1)

D. Types of Indian clothing

Breechcloth (1)

E. Differences between Indians (specific tribe mentioned)

Mayas described (2)
Aztecs described (8)
Sioux/Chippewa described (3)
Inca described (7)
Recognition of variations in dwellings (1)
Recognition of variations in tribes (5)
Recognition of variations in temperment (1)

F. Indian possessions

Canoes (1)
Pottery (1)
Bows and arrow (2)
Tomahawk (1)
Whites brought them horses. (1)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

Most people think Indians are bad, but they're not. (1)
Nowadays, Indians are civilized. (1)
It's not fair; they were here first. (1)
We pushed them into reservations. (3)

The Humboldt Heights sixth grade produced twenty-one (21) essays, categorized as follows:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They were first here. (5)
They had long hair. (2)
They had dark skin. (10)
They helped pilgrims. (1)
They traded with whites. (1)
They had war and rain dances. (1)
They scalp. (5)

A. Generalizations (cont.)

They live on reservations. (7)
They try to sell things. (2)
They are wig collectors. (1)
They get money from government. (1)
Most of them were killed off. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepees (11)
Caves (3)
Brick (2)
Grass (2)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (1)
Deer (3)
Bear (2)
Fish (1)
Corn (1)

D. Types of Indian clothing

Little (3)
Feathers (1)

E. Differences between Indians (specific tribe mentioned)

Chippewa and Sioux described (1)
Recognition of variations in dwellings (5)
Recognition of variations in tribes (3)

F. Indian possessions

Bows and arrows (5)
Spears (3)

G. Historical references

Custer named (2)
Mention of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse (1)
Mention of Battle of Little Big Horn (1)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

They live almost like us. (1)
Humorous descriptions of scalping (3)
They are mostly civilized. (1)

The third graders at Humboldt Heights Elementary School appeared to have strong stereotypes of the Plains Indian, but no knowledge of present Indian populations, and no "attitudes" about either category. In the fourth

grade, there appeared to be some knowledge of the history of Thanksgiving, and a heavy use of Plains stereotypes. Only two students knew of reservations. Humboldt Heights fifth graders were interested in South and North American Indian comparisons; most of these students appeared to realize that contemporary Indians exist, but were not sure of their present conditions. There was a tendency to label Indians as "civilized" or as "uncivilized". In the sixth grade at Humboldt Heights, about one-fourth of the students recognized Indians as the initial New World population. One-half of these students mentioned "tepees," and the average paper tended to refer to skin color (in many cases, it was the first item mentioned). These students appeared to know virtually nothing about present-day Indian populations.

Unidentified Elementary School I

This Bloomington elementary school chose to return its papers without school identification. These essays were accepted as a part of the study's data and were analyzed by grade level in the same manner as the other schools.

The third grade of "Unidentified I" sent in twenty-six (26) papers categorized as follows:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They were the first Americans. (2)
They women cook; the men hunt. (1)
They had chiefs and warriors. (1)
They all had red skin and dark hair. (1)
There are Indians still living. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepee (7)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (10)
Deer (1)

D. Types of Indian clothing

Feathers (2)
War paint (3)

E. Differences between Indians

Sioux/Chippewa mentioned (10)
Recognition of variations in tribes (7)

F. Indian possessions

Canoes (9)
Spears (2)

G. Historical references

"Susan" mentioned (8)
[Apparently the class learned the story of an Indian girl named Susan who was scalped by the Chippewas.]
References to Indian names (10)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

None

The fourth grade of Unidentified I forwarded twenty-five (25) essays:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They were the first settlers. (2)
They helped pilgrims. (3)
They had red skin. (5)
They had long hair. (1)
They took scalps. (3)
They live in houses like us. (1)
They are still in Indian camps but without tepees. (1)
Indians don't have clothes like us. (1)
Some are very poor and have little to eat. (1)

B. Types of Indian clothing

Feathers (10)
Buckskin (2)
Mocassins (1)
War paint (5)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (9)
Deer (5)
Rabbit (2)
Bear (2)
Lion (1)

D. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepee (10)
Longhouse (2)
Cave (1)

E. Differences between Indians

Recognized existence of different tribes. (3)

F. Indian possessions

Canoes (1)
Bows and arrows (6)
Spears (1)
Hatchets (1)
Horses (1)
Used smoke signals (1)
Had many gods and spirits (1)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

Most are just people. (1)
Some are nice, some mean. (6)
They go running around and killing. (1)
They were on the warpath all the time. (1)
They go "wo, wo, wo." (1)
Indians are very mean. (1)
It is hard for Indians to become white but they try. (1)
Custer did good, but not enough; the whites went out and really gave it to them. (1)

The fifth grade of Unidentified I forwarded twenty-five (25) papers:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They're brown. (1)
They're red. (1)
They got their name from Columbus. (1)
They were first farmers. (1)
They were the first settlers. (3)
They helped pilgrims. (1)
They mostly live in reservations. (3)
They live in Arizona. (1)
They don't dress like they used to. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepees (14)
Wood (2)
Caves (3)
Hogan (4)
Huts (1)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (10)
Whales (1)
Deer (3)
Fish (2)
Corn (1)
Sheep (3)

D. Types of Indian clothing

War paint (5)
They never did wear many clothes. (1)

E. Differences between Indians

Some white, black, brown (1)
Some long, some short hair (2)
Recognition of variations in tribes (10)
Recognition of variations in religion (2)
Recognition of variations in dwellings (8)

F. Indian possessions

Canoes (3)
Travois (2)
Pottery (4)
Beadwork (2)
Horses from Spanish (1)
Bows (2)
Tomahawks (1)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

The Indians were real conservationists. (1)
Indians should be treated better. (1)
I feel sorry for the Aztecs. We destroyed their beautiful kingdom. (1)
It was their world before we came. (1)
Whites came and showed them the medicine man was useless. (1)

The sixth grade from Unidentified I forwarded twenty-six (26) papers, categorized as follows:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They helped the pilgrims. (4)
They were red-skinned. (1)
They were dark skinned. (3)

A. Generalizations (cont.)

They were here first. (5)
The men hunt; the women cook. (4)
They had many gods. (3)
They're on reservations. (10)
They were put on reservations. (9)
There are few left. (2)
Most have poor jobs. (1)
They live in the slums. (3)
They dress like us and have our customs. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepee (9)
Longhouse (2)
Clay (2)

C. Types of Indian food

Corn (1)
Buffalo (7)
Fish (2)
Deer (4)

D. Types of Indian clothing

War paint (2)

E. Differences between Indians

Recognition of variations in tribes (9)
Recognition of variations in dwellings (3)
Recognition of variations in temperament (2)
Recognition of variations in language (1)

F. Indian possessions

Horses (2)
Bows and arrows (5)
Spears (6)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

Indians aren't mean or bad. (1)
We cheated them of their land. (9)
The women were slaves to their husbands. (1)
Indians don't like whites. (1)
Some Indians live on reservations while some have learned to live with modern people. (1)
Indians are like anybody else but they have red skin. (1)
We should let them have that island. (1)

Unknown Elementary School I's third graders knew about certain Plains Indians stereotypes, expressed no "attitudes" about Indians, and had no idea of present-day Indian populations. The fourth graders from this school also appeared to know about Plains Indians stereotypes, while only five appeared to know that some Indians exist today. Six papers expressed damaging stereotypes, while five others employed derogatory terminology. Unknown Elementary I's fifth graders moved away from generalizations of a stereotypic nature, and expressed interest in improved rights for American Indians. There appeared to be little knowledge of reservations in this group. The sixth graders at Unknown Elementary School I recognized differences in tribes and dwellings, and more than half of these students were aware of present-day American Indians. Most of them expressed pro-Indian "attitudes", but some labelled Indians as "uncivilized".

Unidentified Elementary School II

A second Bloomington elementary school chose not to identify itself when forwarding essays completed by students in attendance. Content analysis of these papers is presented by grade level below:

The third grade sent in sixteen (16) papers with the following remarks:

I. "Factual" statements
   A. Generalizations
      Men hunt; women cook. (1)
      They liked firewater. (1)
      They have powwows. (1)

   B. Types of Indian dwellings
      Tepees (4)
      Pueblo caves (1)
      Wigwams (1)

   C. Types of Indian food
      Buffalo (1)
      Deer (1)
      They have little. (1)

D. Types of Indian clothing

They dress different. (2)
They dress like us. (1)

E. Differences between Indians

Description of the Sioux and/or Chippewa (5)
Recognition of variations in temperment (2)
Recognition of the existence of various tribes (1)

F. Indian possessions and history

Squanto helped pilgrims. (1)
They used canoes. (1)
They have beadwork. (1)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

I like Indians. (1)

The fourth grade sent in twenty-two (22) papers:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They have long hair. (1)
They fought with wagon trains. (1)
They are poor and hardly have homes. (1)
They don't hunt and live in tepees. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepees (5)
Caves (1)
Clay houses (1)
Animal skin (1)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (2)
Corn (3)
Bear (1)

D. Types of Indian clothing

Deer skin (1)

E. Differences between Indians

Description of Sioux and/or Chippewa (2)
Recognition of variations in temperment (2)
Recognition of the existence of various tribes (2)

F. Indian possessions

Horses (1)
Rugs (2)
Spears (1)
Arrows (1)

G. Indian history

They helped pilgrims. (1)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

Indians are fun to visit in a camp. (1)
They are nice. (2)
Indians are friendly if you don't hurt them. (1)
Whites are their enemy. (1)
They scalped. (1)
They'd be nice if we would. (1)
They were real boozers. (1)
On TV they are messy and kill a lot. (1)
They're fat. (1)
Indians are lazy. (1)

The sixth grade of Unidentified Elementary School II sent twenty-one (21) papers for analysis:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They have black hair. (3)
The men hunt; the women cook. (1)
They live on reservations. (7)
They need better schools. (1)
Most are very poor. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepee (3)
Mud hut (1)
Shacks (1)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (6)
Deer (3)
Fish (1)

D. Types of Indian clothing

Feathers (1)
War paint (1)
Clothes like us (1)

E. Differences between Indians

Recognition of variations in temperment (4)
Recognition of the existence of various tribes (1)
Recognition of the variations in belief (1)
Description of Sioux and/or Chippewa (1)

F. Indian history

They came from Asia. (1)
Columbus named them. (2)
They were the first Americans (4)
They helped pilgrims. (4)
They were fighting for their land. (1)

G. Indian possessions and customs

Bow and arrows (2)
Sign language (2)
Rain and war dances (1)
Horses (2)
Stake burning (1)
Scalping (2)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

They are neglected. (1)
They are afraid of whites because of our sickness. (1)
I don't mind them if I'm not by them. (1)
They are brave and intelligent. (1)
Whites took land and gold. (1)
They scalp and kill and some are friendly. (1)
They are wild and eat raw meat. (1)

The third graders in Unidentified Elementary School II were aware of local Indians and had begun to form stereotypes of Plains Indians. Only three students in this class recognized any tribal or temperment differences and only four expressed statements regarding the present-day life of Indians. The fourth graders in this school made little mention of history and little mention of any differences among Indians. For these young students, Indians were hard-workers in older times but today are poor and living badly. There were several prejudices expressed. The sixth graders in Unidentified Elementary School II linked the buffalo with all Indians. About one-fifth of this class recognized that Indians were here first; seven mentioned reservations, observing that whites pushed Indians off their lands; five

recognized current Indian poverty. An additional five students indicated some prejudice against Indians, while all of the students expressed implicit "attitudes" in their generalizations.

Park School

The students of Park Elementary School's third grade responded to the topic, "What I Know About Indians", with these comments drawn from the seven (7) papers that were received.

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They have brown or beige skin. (1)
Some are still living. (2)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepees (6)
Lodges (1)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (5)
Rice (2)
Deer (2)
Fish (1)

D. Differences between Indians

Recognition of the existence of various tribes (1)
Recognition of variation in houses (2)
Recognition of variation in temperment (1)
Comparison of Sioux and Chippewa (2)

E. Indian possessions

Arrows (2)
Horses from whites (1)
Guns from whites(1)

F. Indian history

They were here first. (2)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

None expressed

The five (5) papers received from Park Elementary School's fourth grade contained the following:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

Medicine men lived. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepee (1)

C. Types of Indian clothing

Mocassins (4)

D. Differences between Indians

Comparison of Sioux and Chippewa (5)
Recognition of differences in skin color between Indians (1)
Recognition of the existence of various tribes (4)

E. Indian possessions and customs

Lacrosse (3)
Canoes (3)
Bow and arrow (2)
Guns (2)

F. Indian history

They traded with whites. (2)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

None expressed

The fifth grade from Park Elementary School sent in eight (8) essays:

I. Factual statements

A. Generalizations

Indians chop and shrink heads. (2)
Indians kill and steal. (1)
Indians speak like this: "Me um Big Chief want um you Little Feather". (1)
They live in homes now. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepees (5)

C. Types of Indian clothing

Mocassins (1)
War paint (1)

D. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (5)
Corn (2)
Bear (1)

E. Differences between Indians

Recognition of the existence of various tribes (1)
Comparison of Sioux and Chippewa (5)

F. Indian possessions

They used a travois. (2)
Horses (1)
Bows and arrows (3)

G. Indian history

They were the first settlers. (1)
They helped pilgrims. (2)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

We were wrong to take their land. (1)
We lied to them. (1)
They are always ready for action. (1)

The sixth grade from Park Elementary School forwarded nineteen (19) responses to the topic, "What I Know About Indians":

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They have dark skin. (5)
They have long hair. (3)
Indians get cars and money from the government. (1)
They don't have to work or go to school. (1)
They live on reservations. (4)
More Indians live now than 100 years ago. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Mud huts (9)
Caves (1)
Igloo (1)
Tepees (12)

C. Types of Indian food

Corn (3)
Buffalo (12)
Deer (4)
Rice (1)
They do not eat canned or frozen food. (1)

D. Indian possessions or customs

They smoke peace pipes. (1)
They used canoes. (2)
They used travois (2)
They have bead work. (1)
They believed in spirits and had many gods. (1)
They don't play hockey, football, or basketball. (1)
Bows and arrows. (6)
Spears (4)
Tomahawks (3)
Whites gave them guns. (1)

E. Differences between Indians

Recognition of variations in dwellings (9)
Recognition of variations in temperment (1)
Recognition of the existence of various tribes (9)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

They were savage, but now they are civilized. (1)
Their doctors are dumb. (1)
They're dumb; they believe in spirits. (1)
Indians have been the longest people and ever will be. (1)
They were the first people here, but they did not discover America. (1)

The Park Elementary School third graders knew about the Plains Indians stereotypes, but once again, there was no recognition of present-day Indian life. Few "attitudes" were expressed in this grade. The fourth graders were relatively similar in their responses, drawing one comparison between the Sioux and Chippewa, but expressing nothing more. Two of the fifth graders did write fantasy stories about Indians today, in which themes involving the cutting off of human heads were involved. The other fifth graders wrote of the Sioux and Chippewa, while two students named whites as morally wrong in their relationship to Indians. The Park School sixth graders began to recognize differences in housing and tribes, but appeared

to be more comfortable with the Woodland and Plains Indians. Some religious biases were expressed, and in one case, Indians were named as "killers". No reason has been identified that would explain why so few papers were sent in for analysis.

Brookside School

The fourth grade from Brookside Elementary School sent in thirty (30) essays for analysis:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They were red. (1)
They don't have good homes. (1)
They still use Indian customs. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepees (5)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (11)
Dog's liver (2)

D. Indian possessions or customs

Sign language (1)
Bravery tests (cutting skin) (5)
Peace pipe used (1)
Smoked peace pipes (1)
They still use Indian customs. (1)

E. Differences between Indians

Recognition of variations in temperment (2)
Recognition of the existence of various tribes (5)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

When the teacher told us they were still alive, it sure surprised me. (1)
People think there's something wrong with Indians; that's why reservations. (1)
I think Indians are brave. (1)
If I saw an Indian, I'd be scared stiff. (1)
Whites killed off the Indian's meat. (3)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians (cont.)

I would have liked the Indians to survive the white man. (1)
They had feelings just like us. (1)
Indians have no likes of any people. (1)
Whites did not pay for land. (1)
They could be like us if they got jobs and worked hard. (1)

The twenty-one papers received from the fifth grade at Brookside School yielded the following:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

There are hundreds living. (1)
There are very few living. (3)
They live in poor homes. (3)
They don't have clothes or houses like us. (1)
All live in the forest. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepees (19)
Brick huts (3)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (12)
Corn (7)
Fish (2)
Deer (6)

D. Types of Indian clothing

War paint (2)
Mocassins (1)

E. Indian possessions or customs

Arrows (8)
Spears (1)
Beadwork (4)
Pottery (1)

F. Differences between Indians

Recognition of the existence of various tribes (8)
Recognition of variations in religion (1)
Recognition of variations in customs (1)
Recognition of variations in temperment (1)
Comparison of Sioux and Chippewa (16)

G. Indian history

They were first settlers. (1)
They helped pilgrims. (2)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

They talk strange. (2)
Now there are too many white men to kill, so Indians have to live on a reservation. (2)
Indians were driven out by the whites. (3)
They always attacked pilgrims. (1)
They said "Me go hunting you stay here". (1)
Some Indians we know because of their braveness like Pocohantes and Sacagawea. (1)

The sixth grade of Brookside School forwarded twenty-three (23) papers which contained the following:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They have red skin. (2)
Many things are being done to help the Indian (food, clothes). (1)
Some don't have schools. (1)

B. Types of Indian clothing

Buffalo (2)
Mocassins (1)
War Paint (2)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (10)
Deer (2)
Corn (3)

D. Indian possessions and customs

Bow and arrows (5)
Guns (1)
Spear (1)
Horses (3)
They made pottery. (3)

E. Indian history

They were here first. (5)
They helped pilgrims. (7)

F. Differences between Indians

Comparison of Sioux and Chippewa (19)
Recognition of variations in language (1)
Recognition of the existence of various tribes (4)
Recognition of variations in temperment (1)
Recognition of the variations in dwellings (1)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

They deserve better jobs. (1)
I think Indians are just as good or bad as we are. (1)
I say if they kill they have a reason. (1)
We didn't treat them as we ought to. (1)
We cheated them. (1)
They're the same as us except for color. (1)

The Brookside fourth grade students were most concerned about how they learned of Indians (mentioning books, films, and talks) rather than with what they had learned. Five of them knew about present Indian life and there was much indignation over their treatment by whites. The Brookside fifth grade was most concerned with Minnesota tribes, with one fifth grader suggesting that reservation living is often synonymous with a poverty style of life. Some of them appeared to have become familiar with Pocohantes and identified her as a "brave" Indian. The Brookside sixth grade was also interested in the Minnesota Sioux and Chippewa, and indignant toward whites and their treatment of Indians. About one-fifth of these students recognized that poverty exists on Indian reservations.

Creekside School

The students of Creekside Elementary School in Bloomington responded to the essay question in the third grade only. There were fifty-eight (58) papers which were analyzed as follows:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (38)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepees (28)
Mud homes (1)

C. Indian possessions and customs

Horses from whites (1)
Burial mounds (5)
Canoes (11)
Peace pipes (2)
Bows and arrows (19)
Tomahawks (5)
For torture -- nailed person on a board and shot arrows at him (1)

D. Differences between Indians

Comparison between Sioux and Chippewa (12)
Recognition of the existence of various tribes (5)
Recognition of language differences (5)

E. Indian history

Indians came first. (1)
Indians were at Thanksgiving. (4)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

Their skin is like ours only a suntan. (1)
Indians are just like us. They eat, live, dress, work, travel just as we do. (20)
No one can say Indians aren't people; they are very smart and nice. (2)
The Indians were mean. (1)
The Pilgrims did a lot of things for the Indians. (1)
The Indians did a lot of things for the whites. (4)
Indians were at first afraid of whites. (1)

These Creekside third graders exhibited a great understanding of the Plains Indians and a little of the Minnesota Sioux and Chippewa. They appeared to show little understanding of contemporary Indians, but twenty of this group insisted that Indians were exactly like themselves.

Indians Mounds Elementary School

The elementary children of Indian Mounds Elementary School in Bloomington responded to the essay question on four grade levels. The twenty-six (26) papers from the third grade contained the following:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Types of Indian clothing

Headdress (3)
Buckskin (4)
Beads (3)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Tepees (7)
Caves (10)
Straw houses (7)
Trees (2)
Tents (1)
Cabins (1)

C. Types of Indian food

Corn (7)
Deer (1)
Wild dog's liver (5)
Buffalo (6)
Bear (1)

D. Indian possessions and customs

They used sign language. (1)
They had totem poles. (3)
They believed that God is an owl. (1)
They believed that all is spirit. (1)
They had war dances. (5)
Bows and arrows (1)
Spears (4)
Blow gun (1)

E. Differences between Indians

Recognition of the existence of various tribes (6)
Recognition of variations in dwellings (11)
Recognition of variations in clothing (1)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

They look like real Indians when they dance, like they walk barefoot on hot rocks. (1)
They believe there's a spirit god, but there really isn't. (1)
Whenever they killed a cowboy, they would scalp him. (1)
Scalping is a common thing; they would scalp wolves. (1)
The big chiefs would jump over four feet of fire. (1)
They eat all raw meat, blubber, fish. (1)

The twenty-four (24) papers of the fourth graders at Indian Mounds Elementary School yielded the following results:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They have red skin. (10)
There are hardly any left. (2)
They take scalps. (11)

B. Types of Indian clothing

Mocassins (3)
Fur (1)
War paint (10)
Hardly any (5)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (8)
Deer (3)

D. Indian possessions and customs

War dances (6)
Peace pipes (5)
Bow and arrows (6)
Guns (4)
Hatchets (2)
Pottery making (8)

E. Types of Indian dwelling

Tepees (12)

F. Differences between Indians

Recognition of differences in clothing (1)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

They killed white men. (14)
Indians mean big trouble. (I)
They tell lies and fibs. (1)
They are one of the meanest people. (2)
They have funny names. (1)

The sixteen (16) fifth grade papers from Indian Mounds Elementary School contained the following:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They have brown-red skin. (1)

B. Types of Indian dwellings

Trees (1)
Tepees (6)

C. Types of Indian clothing

Feathers (2)
Buckskin (2)

D. Types of Indian food

Oxen (1)
Wolves (1)
Buffalo (5)
Rice (2)

E. Indian possessions

Bows and arrows (4)
Tomahawks (2)

F. Differences between Indians

Recognition of the existence of various tribes (6)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

Indians fought to save their land. (1)
They had very weird customs. (1)

The sixth grade of Indian Mounds Elementary School forwarded twenty-seven (27) papers:

I. "Factual" statements

A. Generalizations

They had red skin. (9)
They're good on skyscrapers. (1)
They are on reservations. (12)
Very few are rich. (3)
Indians starve on reservations. (1)
They sell jewelry to tourists. (1)
They don't exist now. (1)

B. Types of Indian clothing

War paint (2)

C. Types of Indian food

Buffalo (5)
Corn (1)

D. Types of Indian dwelling

Tepee (9)
Grass hut (1)

E. Indian possessions and customs

Horses (3)
Burial mounds (4)
Arrows (3)
Art works (2)

F. Indian history

They were here first. (9)
Thanksgiving (4)
Jim Thorpe is an Indian. (1)

G. Differences between Indians

Recognition of the existence of various tribes (7)
Recognition of variations in temperment (5)

II. "Attitudes" toward Indians

They eat and dress like us. (1)
Over half the Indians were mean. (2)
They scalped (2)
They were brave. (1)
They should have more land. (4)
It's hard to tell Indians from others. (1)
They're still good at crafts. (1)

The third graders responded to the essay instrument with a wide variety of answers regarding what they believed Indians to have eaten and to have worn. They seemed to be evenly divided into three groups regarding Indian housing: seven chose tepees, seven said straw houses, and ten caves. As with many other classes, there was little recognition of the existence of present day Indian populations. One of these students mentioned an Indian party where participants ate smoked fish and cornbread, danced, and played Indian games. The fourth grade was also concerned with Plains Indians stereotypes, and for many of these students, their initial comment was that "Indians have red skin". Many of them mentioned scalping, war paint, and tepees. A majority of the class stated that "Indians killed white men." Fifth graders had supplied very short answers which merely described some aspect of Sioux or Plains Indian life. There was no mention of present Indian life and few "attitudes" were expressed. In the case of sixth graders, the greatest concerns appeared to be that "Indians have red skin" and that "they are on reservations." Few of these students mentioned having seen a reservation themselves.

A Comparison of All Participating Schools by Grade Level

An attempt was made to summarize the responses of each participating elementary school according to grade level. The summaries of this

effort are presented below (by frequencies of classes):

Third Grade classes -- seven classes

- Plains and/or local Indians described (6)
- Few "attitudes" expressed (5)
- No present conditions mentioned (7)
- No recognition of differences whatsoever (1)
- Differences in housing or food recognized (1)

Fourth grade classes -- seven classes

- Plains Indians described (4)
- Local Sioux/Chippewa compared (2)
- Few "attitudes" (4)
- Damaging stereotypes from one quarter of students (3)
- No present Indian life mentioned (3)
- No recognition of differences (4)

Fifth grade classes -- seven classes

- Sioux/Chippewa/Plains compared (3)
- North/South American Indians compared (2)
- Few "attitudes" expressed (5)
- Pro-Indian attitudes expressed (2)
- No present life mentioned (3)
- Present life described:
  - from one-half of class (1)
  - from one-fourth of class (1)
  - from one-fifth of class (1)
- Recognition of the existence of different tribes (5)

Sixth grade classes -- seven classes

- Plains Indians described (3)
- No present day conditions mentioned (1)
- Generalizations:
  - Pro-Indian (3)
  - "Scalping, killers" (1)
- Many "attitudes" expressed (6)
- Existence of reservations:
  - known by one-third of class (3)
  - known by one-fifth of class (2)
- Recognition of differences:
  - in dwellings (3)
  - in skin color (2)
  - in tribes (5)

When examining the difference in the students' papers one is struck by the diversity in knowledge of the Indians 1) among students of the same class; 2)among classes; and 3) among schools. There seems to be little

assurance whether the student will study local Indians, rice, dog livers, diversities, or similarities. Most students identify the Plains Indians first, a probable result of television and movies depicting these Indians.

When comparing third grades, six of seven classes described Plains or local Sioux or Chippewa Indians. Seven of eight classes did not recognize a present Indian existence, and only one class described differences in housing or foods. A third grade paper was typically historical in approach with few "attitudes."

The standard fourth grader's paper was quite similar to the third grader's, concentrating on the same Indian tribes; in only two classes did students mention present Indian life. Four classes did not distinguish among tribes and three classes contained damaging stereotypes from about one fourth of the students. Reductionism rather than the recognition of differences was the dominating perspective.

Three classes within the fifth grade had branched into studies of the Incas and Aztecs, while three examined the Chippewa and Sioux. Three classes with varying percentages of students (one-half, one-fourth, and one-fifth) recognized a present Indian life, while three classes did not note contemporary Indian existence. Two classes recognized differences in foods and tribes. Five of the seven classes did not exhibit "attitudes" about Indians while the remaining two expressed pro-Indian "attitudes."

Only three of the sixth grade classes continued to concentrate on Plains Indians, and there was an awareness of present day life. In two classes one-fifth of the students knew of reservations, and in three classes one-third of the students possessed this awareness. These proportions should not be taken too readily, however, for in the majority of cases the students simply knew that reservations existed. Three of the classes could distinguish among dwellings. It was in the sixth grade that students expressed their "attitudes" most freely. Two classes contained a majority of students whose first statement was that Indians had red or dark skin. Indians were described as killers or scalpers, and whites as cheaters. The generalizing and reductionism which abounded from the third grade began to blossom in the sixth grade.

Apparently, not having been taught to treat each Indian person and each Indian tribe as a single entity allowed these students to over-generalize about "all Indians." To many of these children, "all Indians" have long black hair and red skin, eat raw meat, hunt buffalo, and live in tepees.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Obviously, this research has been indicative rather than specific about the impressions held by Bloomington elementary school children of Indian Americans. We have not attempted to carefully define "attitudes" and "factual" statements, nor have we investigated the Bloomington elementary classrooms to see what school books and materials pertaining to American Indians are being used, and by whom and how well. Instead, we have attempted to assess indirectly how one suburban school system relates to a major Minnesota minority group in its elementary curricula, and to make inferences about the relationship of this Indian curriculum to other forces of impression-shaping note, such as the mass media, peer groups, and parents.

We feel that the findings of this survey essentially validate the assertions of the Indian Education Sub-committee report, some of which we quoted at the beginning of this report. These assertions by the Indian Education Subcommittee state clearly that the affective and factual pictures of American Indians presented by public schools tend to be uncomplimentary and inaccurate. What is important about this survey's findings is that even where comparatively well-developed "factual" knowledge of American Indians exists in the classroom, the positive impact of this knowledge is greatly mitigated by a host of most unfortunate emotional sets, and glib, sometimes uncomplimentary over-generalizations. Thus, it is possible that even where very effective classroom resources exist for the teaching of American Indian history and culture, the benefits of these resources will be sadly undermined by other forces operating to diminish the impact of the classroom. Of course, we realize that many of the classrooms participating in the survey did not begin to have an adequate level of factual, sufficiently detailed materials about American Indians available to school children - or so our essays indicate. In addition, it was painfully evident that some teachers were inclined to single

out certain "facts" about American Indians and to overly emphasize these to the exclusion of a broader picture of past and present Indian life styles. We have already noted that the most depressing absence of "fact" about American Indians exists where present conditions are concerned. Precious little contemporary information about living, breathing American Indians is apparently being provided in Bloomington elementary school classrooms at this time. It is this absence of contemporary materials which, combined with over-generalized, often demeaning, and under-elaborated historical materials which sets the stage for a new round in the old cycle of myth creation and maintainance about the American Indian. When the problems of poor teacher preparation or inadequate teacher attitude are added, together with the often negative influences of family, media and peer groups, the picture become generally depressing and fits very well the pessimistic and gloomy picture portrayed by the writers of the Indian Education Subcommittee report.

Some social scientists, referring to certain conditions of the early 1970's state that the influence of the school on the formation of childrens' attitudes toward minority groups is essentially neutral or negative; that is, that children who enter school with negative attitudes toward minority groups will tend to emerge with the same attitudes, and that students who enter the schools with fair to good attitudes toward minorities will run a small chance of having their attitudes toward these minorities enhanced. Indeed, the last prognosis runs essentially to the contrary. Since the school as an institution in American society is becoming increasingly irrelevant to pupils, and since many parents, even when they are concerned about the functions of the school, know little about it and are relatively powerless to change it, is the school the most effective point at which to place our resources and energies to make effective changes in attitudes toward minorities? The curricular aspects of schools often do not seem very important in creating a climate for more positive attitudes toward racial and ethnic minorities. Rather, the informal aspects of the school, and to a far greater extent the mass media do seem very important by comparison. Some of these media, to be sure, impinge upon the child in the context of the school environment. But in the

main, children are reached by radio, television, commercial films, comic books, weekly magazines, local newspapers, and the like outside or tangential to the operations of the school. In addition, peer groups and families operate with massive importance where racial attitudes are concerned, and these influences are almost always beyond the control of the formal curriculum of the school.

It is the informal aspects of school which are important, and which, in Bloomington, have apparently validated existing Indian-white interaction patterns and expectations common to the past. It is no small matter to note that, apparently, these revalidations and continuations of old misconceptions and problems are assisted by under-trained and - in a few apparent cases - unsympathetic classroom teachers.

The Indian Historian Press, Inc. has recently published a manual (Textbooks and the American Indian) which reminds us of some of the pitfalls that can be encountered in teaching "about" Indian Americans in the classroom. Some of the manual's suggestions for effective guidelines in the development, employment and evaluation of Indian cultural and historical materials are relevant to this research report. We have listed some of the more important of these below, since they seem related to many of the problems we have encountered in the education of white elementary school children in Bloomington, Minnesota:[4]

> Errors of omission are particularly unacceptable in a state or regional history. American Indians should be treated as part of the history of the state of region.
>
> Accurate data should be provided as to the tribes. areas of possession, conflicts of the past..
>
> Degrading descriptions are not permissible, especially in such terminology as "savages, primitives, hostiles, aimless, wandering."
>
> The story of the American Indian today, his situation, locations and presence in urban areas should be dealt with. His organized groups should be described, his leaders mentioned, and wherever reservations exist, they should be described accurately.

> The contributions of the Indian to the state or region should be dealt with specifically. The names and stories of outstanding Indian leaders should be part of the pride of the state.
>
> Crimes of the white people should not be glossed over or omitted, such as those occurring during the gold rush. They should be described objectively, and historic reasons for the situation given. (Emphasis added.)

Not only did author Jeannette Henry and editor Rupert Costo suggest general guidelines for historical and cultural materials concerning American Indians; they also suggested how these materials might be employed most effectively in the classroom by sympathetic, well trained teachers. We have reproduced some of these suggestions below in the light of informative findings in the Bloomington, Minnesota elementary school survey:[5]

> Accurate, objective data should replace the usual "dream world" of an author's fancy as to Indian life, culture and history.
>
> Degrading descriptions of the American Indian should not be utilized, whether by use of such words as "savage," or by implication and innuendo.
>
> The history and lifeways of the native Americans should be described in a developmental sense, instead of the usual static, generalized manner.
>
> Oversimplification and generalizations should be avoided, and the description of the Indian peoples as tribes and entities of considerable variety should be emphasized.
>
> Most histories treat the American Indian as though the only relevant matter was his relationship to the whites, and to the European society. Indians within their own society, with consideration for their internal and changing situation, as well as their inter-tribal relationships, should be accurately and objectively described.
>
> The general misconception of most persons today is that the Indian has disappeared. The contrary is true. It is a fact that Indian societies still exist. Treating them as extinct is to put blinders upon current history. Changes have come about, but the Native societies and social mores continue to exist.

> The Indians of today should be accurately described: where the people are, what reservations and communities they occupy, what their economic situation is, what their educational conditions are, and their political position as well. The relationship of the Indian to the federal government should be treated in a developmental way, his contributions to society and the world at large should be named and described. Such Native contributions should not be limited to those of material culture, but recognition should be given to the philosophy and democratic thought for which the Native American was known before white contact. His religious beliefs, his yearning for knowledge, his human and spiritual traits, should be given consideration.
>
> If conjectures are made, such as those considering origins of the Indian people on this continent, then these should be on the plane of objective scholarship, and all sides of the question should be noted. Implications and innuendos of Indian practices and customs should be avoided, as to Indian life and modern western life. This is certainly unfair to the Native American, who lived in a society of his own making with his accepted and well developed complex cultures as the standard for his behavior and customs.
>
> Many Indian people have entered the western world, and have made significant contributions. These should be noted and recognized. Many others prefer to cling to the old traditions, and these should be respected.
>
> The facts should be told without fear, about the treatment of Indians by Spanish missionaries and gold miners. The feudal slave labor system in the missions should be explained. So too, should the facts of the attempted genocide of Indians during the gold rush be faithfully told, as part of history. No attempts should be made to gloss over such historic facts. Everything has been said already in the text-books, blaming the Indian for conflict, "massacres," and hostility. That these were brought on by white intrusion, invasion and harassment, is never mentioned. Now let us tell the students the whole truth instead of half of it. (Emphasis added)

On a broader historical, geographic and anthropological basis, Henry and Costo then suggest some useful techniques for dealing with Indian-white intercultural contact situations, both past and present. These suggestions seem most apropo to us not only in light of the Bloomington report and its findings, but also because of several

disturbing features of white-Indian interactions in Minneapolis during the 1960's and early 70's. The authors of Textbooks and the American Indian make the following broadly-based cultural suggestions:[6]

> The history and culture of the American Indian should be treated as part of the history of the races of man.
>
> The story of mankind on this continent, his explorations and settlement of the land, as its discoverer, should be treated when ancient races are treated. The American Indian is one of the oldest races of man in the world, and has inhabited the same area of the earth for a longer time than most other peoples.
>
> Social problems of the American Indian should be treated as part of the social problems of the world at large when discussing this subject in a textbook such as this subject encompasses.
>
> When discussing the cultural and economic development of the New World, also discussed should be the effect upon the Old World, of the economy and cultures of the New World and its Native population, together with their contributions to national and world economy and thought.
>
> All textbooks in world history and geography deal with the subject entirely from the white viewpoint, as one of colonial conquest. The complete history of the world and its peoples should be given, together with the story of their struggles against colonialism and conquest. The various stages of society that evolved through time, the beliefs and religions of the people, their political systems and their effect on the masses of people, should be discussed.
>
> When treating of the American nation today, it should be recognized that the Indian is a part of American life today, the original and basic foundation upon which the American Nation was capable of coming into existence, of continuing to survive, and whose contributions made possible the economic advance of this nation. The propaganda of how "great, powerful, and rich" America is, should be avoided. This type of self-satisfaction ill becomes a nation with the problems of today, and has nothing to do with the efforts of the majority of the people - the so-called "little people" - to improve their lives, educate their children, and create a world free from wars.

While we do not think the suggestions offered on the preceding pages from Henry and Costo are totally sufficient, we have reproduced them here because we believe them to be the best overall set of guidelines of this type available today.

Some Further Confusions About American Indians

Taken at face value, the suggestions for improving American curricula and texts by Henry and Costo fail to take into account differences among Indians themselves over many aspects of Indian life, both contemporary and past. When such occasional disputes are augmented by the involvement of well-meaning but often poorly informed whites, the stage is set for some interesting, sometimes depressing drama. When this drama reaches the mass media, and is heightened in intensity by the pressures of the 1970s, it often attracts much public attention. In this regard, we have chosen to highlight our point concerning what we believe to be an honest oversight on the part of Henry and Costo through the following letters, recently published in the Minneapolis Tribune:

(April 24, 1970) Members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) issued a protest Thursday against the movie "A Man Called Horse," alleging that the film portrays Indians as savage, cruel and ignorant.

Clyde Bellecourt, a leader of AIM, said the group plans to protest demonstrations at the Lyric Theater, 711 Hennepin Avenue, to coincide with today's opening of the movie.

AIM said in a statement yesterday that makers of the film "totally humiliate and degrade an entire Indian nation"; "make sure all Indians are savage, cruel, and ignorant"; make a white man become an "Indian" hero, and desecrate the Indian religion, among other things.

The movie also opens today at the Strand Theater in St. Paul.

Starring Richard Harris, the movie is the tale of an English lord who is captured by Sioux Indians while he is in Dakota Indian territory in the early 19th century. He is at first made into a beast of burden - "Horse" - but later becomes a leader of the Indians.

Bellecourt said the protest was voted unanimously by 40 to 50 AIM members Wednesday night after a meeting with the film's producer, Sandy Howard, and one of the film's stars, Corinne Tsopei.

Bellecourt indicated that Howard maintained that the movie is fair and authentic.

The AIM statement called on the public to boycott the film, saying "every dollar going into the theater box office is a vote for bigotry!"

Bellecourt said AIM is seeking support on the issue from blacks, civil rights groups and the college community.

AIM has been in contact with Indian groups in other areas of the country, Bellecourt said, in an attempt to launch a nation-wide protest against the movie.' (Emphasis added.)

(May 31, 1970) To the Editor: The Tribune recently published two letters under the heading, "Movie Misuses Indian Culture." One was written by a minister and the other by an official of the League of Women Voters of Minneapolis.

I note that both of these individuals are members of the leadership structure of the modern white dominant society, and that both of the organizations they represent apparently feel a moral obligation to "protect" the history of the Indian people.

The clergyman proclaims that the film, "A MAN Called Horse," shows the Sioux of 1825 as "the brutal savage," and the other writer says the same thing.

When the white man first became acquainted with the High Plains Indian, usually the Sioux, beginning about the turn of the 19th century, his impression of these Indian people was that they were savage, cruel and ignorant (read Antoine Trudeaux's account of his trip up the Missouri River in 1796, Tabeau's "Narrative of Louisel's Expedition" to the upper Missouri, written in 1803, and the Lewis and Clark account of their encounter with the Sioux in 1804).

Now, almost 200 years later, in the film, "A Man Called Horse," we again have an opportunity to examine the Sioux people as they were during this "first contact" period. And still we have white men (and now even some city Indians) who see the Sioux in this film as "savage, cruel and ignorant." Have we really made any progress in human understanding during these past two centuries?

When the white man first called him "savage," the Sioux, within the framework and context of his habitational environment, was physically strong, very brave, anthropomorphic, fierce in relationship to his enemies, totally independent of all except his immediate family or tribe, and had the capability for enduring unimaginable hardship and pain.

> Those who are the teachers and guardians of all that is good and golden within the modern white dominant society would have us believe that the Sioux were in reality misunderstood but nonetheless outstanding examples - of this society's ideals, banally religious, gentle, ever-loving, kind, and otherwise lovely people who managed to somehow live beautifully in an otherwise brutal environment and who got themselves totally misinterpreted by the nasty old white man.
>
> This view takes the guts and life out of the history of the Sioux people and denies them the strength and virility that were rightfully theirs. In addition, it flies in the face of known historical data and Sioux tradition.
>
> The Sioux people have every reason to be proud of their early history as it is depicted in "A Man Called Horse." It is as correct as research and knowledge can make it. - Clyde D. Dollar, historian and technical adviser, "A Man Called Horse," Vermillion, S.D.[8] (Emphasis added.)

It should be amply illustrated by these selected examples that not all Indians agree on Indian historical and cultural matters, and not all whites - even with the best of intentions - are able to find themselves acceptable in their interpretations of the Indian past to Indians themselves. Henry and Costo have rightfully called for the most scrupulously truthful presentation of the Indian past and present, and it is to these ends that our efforts might be directed - both in research of scholarly and field varieties, and within the collegiate and public school classrooms.

Some Further Suggestions to the Reader

Various organizations have played important roles in the development of sufficient or insufficient curricula on American Indians in the past, and it may be expected that these same organizations will play important roles of one kind or another in the future. These organizations may be broken into three basic categories: all white in racial makeup; all Indian in racial makeup; and some form of racially mixed makeup.

Some organizations which are either all white in makeup or racially

mixed (usually on a token basis) and which have had great importance in the development - or the absence - of appropriate Indian curricula in the public schools are the following:

Minnesota State Department of Education

The various state colleges of Education in Minnesota

The Upper Midwest Regional Educational Laboratory

The United States Office of Education (various bureaus)

District school organizations (such as Bloomington's)

The two basic teacher's organizations (with an exceptional derivative)

District school boards

Individual teachers and teacher cliques

Isolated student and faculty groups in colleges and high schools)

Parents and "unofficial" parental groups

Parent Teachers Associations

Children's clubs and groups (such as the Boy and Girl Scouts, etc.)

The mass media (television, radio, newspapers, comic books etc.)

With the exception of the first several organizations listed above, we have not attempted any priority ordering based upon alleged culpability for past failure or upon any predictions of the same for the future. Instead we have attempted to suggest what we think are the broad categories of white and mixed organizations that have something to do with the current quality of curricula in formal education where these curricula concern some aspect of American Indian life. We should note, however, that the first several organizations seem to us to bear particular responsibility for taking appropriate assessment and action measures where such conditions as this report has described in Bloomington exist. We may assume that such conditions as we have described in Bloomington are not uncommon in the state of Minnesota (nor, for that matter, in many other states) and that immediate action is called for to correct what are obviously important extensions of unfortunate historical attitudes and values concerning the American Indian. We have already noted how important these attitudes and values seem to be even where the "factual" content seems to be moderately impressive.

Indian organizations also bear responsibility for current conditions obtaining in the public schools. The American Indian Historical Society has made a very impressive first attempt to begin exercising direct influence upon the assessment and development of curricula in American public schools; but to be really effective such pioneering and sophisticated attempts at social change must be disseminated widely and accurately throughout the nation. In this regard, we find it likely that American Indian organizations on the national and local levels will find a natural role for themselves in assisting such efforts as have been made by Henry and Costo. Let us attempt to suggest some Indian organizations at various levels which might find a positive role to play in improving curriculum at the various levels of formal education in Minnesota:

> National Indian Organizations, such as the National Indian Youth Council, National Congress of American Indians, emerging regional and national urban Indian organizations, emerging national scholarly and research-oriented organizations (such as the American Indian Historical Society and the National Indian Training and Research Center).
>
> The Various Reservation Governing Organizations (such as the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe's Reservation Business Committees), and emerging special interest education committees and groups on the reservations (such as the Concerned Menominee Parents Organization).
>
> The Various Urban American Indian Organizations and Interest Groups, such as the University of Minnesota's Indian Upward Bound and Project STAIRS, the Department of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota, advisory committees (such as the Minnesota Indian Education Committee and the Indian Advisory Committee to the Minneapolis Schools, etc.)

All of these Indian organizations and many more not mentioned must work in concert with themselves and with mixed and all-white organizations if substantial gains in Indian-related curriculum development

are to be made in the reasonably near future. To accomplish this end, which we presume to be common to all parties directly and indirectly involved,* will require increased communication among the various groups involved and widespread distribution and understanding of such points of view and guidelines as have already been modelled by Henry and Costo, and which should be supplemented by many more concrete materials acceptable for classroom use. The need for this sort of thorough and time-consuming work may be justified from several perspectives, but perhaps the most convincing one is offered by a teacher in the Columbia Heights, Minnesota school system. This teacher recently completed a course in Indian education offered by the University of Minnesota's General Extension Division and College of Education. Having heard from her instructor of the findings of the Bloomington report and some of its implications, she administered a similar essay experiment to her own third grade class, concluding her letter of evaluation on this experiment with the following words:

> Perhaps the future of "restoring" America to its rightful mind lies in these youngsters, and those like them around our country. I only hope that their minds will not become poisoned along the way, the way our generation seems to have been.

The impact of this teacher's remarks gains in importance by virtue of a consistent and disturbing finding in the Bloomington survey: a fundamental absence of accurate information about <u>contemporary</u>, living and breathing American Indians, whether offered in the classroom or obtained indirectly on the outside. Attempts at school curriculum development and new community information inputs should recognize the extent and importance of this deficiency and bend immediate efforts to "plug the information gap" about contemporary American Indians and their rural and urban life styles.

*this may be an unwarranted assumption in some instances, of course.

Appendix

Dear Sir:

I am a '68 graduate of Lincoln High School. I am currently at the University of Minnesota, interested in education and the American Indian.

I have come to a point in my research in which I must ask your help as a fellow participant. In my pursuit of concepts concerning a child's maturational process, I need your assistance in my attempt to differentiate third, fourth, fifth, and sixth graders' abilities to formulate and express ideas. Could you ask one of your classes from each of these grades to write a one page paper on the topic, "What I know about Indians"? All answers and papers will be kept confidential.

I hope you will assist me in my research. If you have any questions or would be interested in reviewing any ideas I arrive at in the coming months, please contact me at 336-7493. An envelope is enclosed for the return of your school's papers. Thank you very much.

Yours truly,

Lorie Hanson

References

1. United States Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Indian Education: A National Tragedy - A National Challenge, U.S. Government Printing Office (Washington: 1969).

2. Ibid., pp. 22-23

3. See appendix.

4. Jeanette Henry and Rupert Costo, Textbooks and the American Indian, The Indian Historical Press, Inc.: 1970. p. 70.

5. Ibid., pp. 148-149.

6. Ibid., pp. 178-179.

7. Anonymous article. Minneapolis Tribune. April 24, 1970.

8. Clyde D. Dollar, letter to the editor, Minneapolis Tribune. May 31, 1970.